

## **Glenwood Elementary School**

Glenwood elementary is a rural community school nestled in the heart of the Ozarks just outside west plains, Missouri. Located near the Arkansas border, the Glenwood community is without factories, large retailers, or commercial businesses. Many of the district patrons work in business or industry in nearby towns. Most of Glenwood's students live on farms, small plots, or in rental homes.

The Glenwood facility, a single-level and one building campus, is a meeting place for the patrons of the district. Church groups, scouting programs, and other community organizations use the building for group activities. A very successful before- and after- school program provides for quality child care and academic tutoring that is especially helpful for students of working parents. The community takes pride in their school, and there is a feeling of community ownership and a willingness for everyone to do their part to help make Glenwood a top quality educational facility.

Glenwood is celebrating its fiftieth year in 2007. In those fifty years, Glenwood has grown to a population of about 300 students and 30+ certified faculty members. Many of the students' parents, and now grandparents, attended Glenwood as children and have returned because of the family-like atmosphere in the school. It is a close knit community, and everyone pulls together when the need arises.

Because Glenwood is situated in a rural area, local funds are generated from a lower assessed property value. This results in limited revenues with which to serve a high-need student population. For example, fifty-four percent of Glenwood's students qualify for free or reduced lunches. Many Glenwood students face special challenges such as limited experiences, difficult home situations, and increased learning differences. Therefore, the district strives to provide quality programs and materials that provide exposure to a wide array of interesting learning activities so that their rural students receive the same quality of educational experiences as those in more affluent districts.

Glenwood's mission and vision was developed by faculty, students, and teachers to serve as a guiding focus for district planning. The mission represents a collective purpose that is twofold: (1) to educate and prepare each and every student so that they may become valuable contributors to the society in which they live; and (2) to be able to adapt and survive in an ever-changing world. To that end, the vision serves to clarify the most desirable future for Glenwood which includes a dynamic and challenging curriculum, progressive and consistent instruction, programs that prepare students for a changing global society, meaningful and timely academic feedback, and a safe, caring, and attractive school environment. The vision also calls for a collaborative and united staff that learns and works toward a common purpose through clear and measurable goals.

A milestone for Glenwood occurred during the 2003-2004 school year. A school improvement committee of teachers, students, and community members participated in a needs assessment that revealed strengths in the areas of board of education support for smaller classes, administrative support for needed materials and supplies, and a talented and well-experienced staff. However, concerns were found in achievement, lack of articulated and spiraled curriculum, and outdated technology. It was a milestone for Glenwood to agree to align their strengths and address their concerns in a concerted effort toward a vision of academic excellence.

Another milestone was when Glenwood teachers wrote and were awarded two grants: (1) *Professional Learning Communities*, and (2) *Reading First*. The time, effort, and change in attitude needed to make these programs successful was difficult to achieve, but was well worth the effort. Both grants helped train staff and provide the materials for academic improvement. For example, collaborations were established among grade-level teachers, teachers began rewriting and improving the curriculum, and text materials were purchased that followed a coherent scope and sequence throughout the grade levels. These improvements have resulted in significant increases in achievement.

Yet another milestone for Glenwood occurred in the fall of 2004 when Glenwood received its first *Distinction in Performance for Improved Achievement* award, a tradition that continued for the next two consecutive years. Glenwood was also named in the *Top Ten Most Improved for Math Achievement* in Missouri, and was the only K-8 school in the state of Missouri to be nominated for the national *Blue Ribbon Schools Award* for substantial improvement in achievement.